


**REDUCING AND REUSING:
THE DIFFERENCE YOU CAN MAKE WHEN YOU STOP SUPPORTING FAST
FASHION AND START CREATING**


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ABSTRACT

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The world is facing a crisis. Global citizens are not considering the consequences of their purchasing and therefore, with each purchase, they are further polluting our land, air, and water. The Penmen Press Party Dress exhibits the need for global change. Like most universities, Southern New Hampshire University is riddled with excess marketing materials from admissions, including printed publications such as the Penmen Press. The potential for the utilization of such materials in the construction of non-conventional material apparel is what encouraged the creation of the Penmen Press Party Dress. The dress construction is the result of an initiative to reduce pollution and the accumulation of waste, and to make the most of the materials that are already present in our everyday life. Various methods such as weaving, fringing, sewing, and folding will be prominent within the design and used to add texture and complexity to the garment.

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Background and Purpose

Fast fashion is defined as apparel and accessories released quickly into market, with a short renewal cycle and fast delivery time to retailers (Byun & Sternquist, 2008). The emergence of fast fashion in the early 2000s was due to the growth of global fast fashion retailers such as Zara and H&M. Both retailers came to be known for their youthful female target market and relatively fast turnover of on-trend product (Horton, 2018). Before the advent of fast fashion, apparel production took between 6-18 months to move from design, to manufacturing, to distribution, to the selling of product in a retail environment (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007). However, consumers began to demand trendy items in a much shorter time span, making way for fast fashion whose purpose was to deliver new collections, at low prices every, one to two times per week (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007). As Buckley and Clark (2012) note, it is only with the emergence of brands such as Primark and Forever 21 in the last 20 years that consumers with relatively low income have been able to regularly purchase new fashion-forward apparel. Therefore, due to the over-accessibility of apparel and the lack of intimacy or emotion towards the product, the act of disposal is less bothersome and more common.

Contrary to fast fashion is slow fashion and sustainability. According to Burns (2019) sustainability is defined as, “The ability to maintain or improve standards of living without damaging or depleting natural resources for present and future generations.” Essentially, sustainability is the overarching practice of avoiding certain resources, while utilizing others in

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order to properly maintain the environment, foster effective corporate social responsibility, and promote longevity. This thesis offers a unique approach to sustainability in the fashion industry. In the next section, the research purpose and objectives are framed by a review of the relevant literature.

Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

Speed to market and low cost has led to the overconsumption of fast fashion. Fast fashion apparel is extremely accessible and therefore lacks the intimacy, quality, and sense of pride that was historically associated with individuals making their own clothing. The convenience of new apparel at an extremely low price encourages a culture that promotes constant buying and easy disposal. This process equivocates to the constant growth of mass production and therefore creates concern grounded in the three key constructs of the triple-bottom-line: social equity, economics, and the environment (Elkington, 1997; Lee, Choi, Youn, & Lee, 2012). The fast fashion industry will continue to prosper as long as consumers remain uneducated on the harmful effects the apparel industry has on the environment and society. If consumers continue to purchase merchandise in excess from fast fashion brands and the fast fashion brands continue to exploit human and natural resources, the future of the global fashion industry will be more difficult to protect.

Incorporating sustainable practices within the fashion industry specifically allows brands the opportunity to reverse the damage that fast fashion has inflicted upon the Earth and those who inhabit it. Scholars such as Kate Fletcher, Ana Laura Torres, Hae Jin Gam, and Elisa Arrigo are amongst some of the most popular individuals to work so intimately with the concept of applying sustainability to the fashion industry. The most common perception related to brands becoming more sustainable typically relies heavily on promoting innovation within materials,

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manufacture, distribution, use, and disposal (Kate Fletcher, 2012) but in actuality it should extend far beyond that scope. Fletcher (2012) also states that in order for a brand to truly embody sustainable development, they must adjust their current business model to promote slower fashion, and the designers must become advocates, facilitators, and educators on the topic. The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world (Whitmore, 2020), and is responsible for inflicting extreme harm on apparel workers across the globe—therefore reinforcing the need for sustainability-driven action in the fashion industry.

The Environment

As a part of the triple-bottom-line framework proposed by Elkington (1997), there is an obligation for fast fashion brands to continue to promote environmental sustainability and a circular economy. Unlike the normal linear economy that is comprised of making, using, and disposing, a circular economy influences longevity of resources. This circle is produced by utilizing a product as long as possible, and then then extracting the maximum value from the resource, and in turn recovering and regenerating the products and materials at the end of each “life” (WRAP, 2020). Essentially, having a circular economy means that the apparel will be given numerous lives, and will be refigured so that it can be utilized as another valuable resource elsewhere.

Research shows a fashion brand that fails to respect the environment in their operations will only result in creating a prominence of land, air, and water pollution. According to the EPA (2019), although nearly 100% of textiles can be recycled, in 2010 Americans discarded 13.1 million tons of textiles and more than 11 million textiles of those textiles were dumped directly into landfills. In the United States, consumers send nearly 80 pounds of apparel, per person per year, to landfills (Schoenherr, 2019). While this amount is astronomical, additional waste from

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the manufacturing process is also thoughtlessly discarded. Studies show that 15% of all textiles from the manufacturing process end up on the cutting floor and are ultimately discarded (Perry, 2018). Thus, 15% of textiles from manufacturing never end up being utilized in any manner for construction.

Not only is waste prominent in terms of discarding textiles or apparel, but also in the excess merchandise that is sent to other countries. According to Rachel Bick (2018), “Approximately 500,000 tons of used clothing are exported abroad from the United States each year, the majority ending up in low-to-middle income countries (LMICs).” It is estimated that in 2015, the worth of all of the clothing being exported to these countries was more than \$700 million. However, sometimes infrastructure of these countries makes it difficult to support the shipment of excess textiles and in turn the clothing ends up polluting the land.

Through the exploitation of natural resources, not only does the fast fashion industry negatively impact the land, but also waterways. When dyeing apparel, there have been reports that the untreated wastewater from dyes are discharged into the local water sources, releasing dangerous chemicals, metals, and toxins into the water (Bick, 2018). Due to the majority of fast fashion clothing manufacturing taking place overseas in LMICs and 90% of all wastewater globally goes into local drinking sources untreated (China Water Risk, 2018) this essentially means that the water can no longer be used for bathing, drinking, agriculture, or recreation without adverse effects to humans. Similarly, the prominence of hazardous chemicals in the waterways provides grave danger to many of the animals living in the current ecosystem; therefore, harming the food chain (China Water Risk, 2019).

Moreover, up to 40% of synthetic textiles such as polyester, acrylic, nylon, rayon, and acetate end up in the water systems. These textiles consist of microfibers that are unable to be

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sifted out of the water in the sewage and wastewater facilities (Robb, 2019) and because of this, small organisms eat the microfibers. Consequently, through the food chain, humans end up eating microfibers in larger quantities (Whitmore, 2019; Rao, 2020) posing a threat to human health. Jay Robb (2019) concedes that “Nearly 90% of 2,000 fresh and seawater samples tested by the Global Microplastics Initiative contain microfibers,” and that manufacturing clothes is responsible for nearly 20% of all industrial water pollution.

One last environmental impact of the fast fashion industry is the pollution caused to the air. The World Bank articulates that manufacturers for fast fashion companies are responsible for 10% of the globe’s greenhouse gas emissions (Robb, 2019), therefore acknowledging the very high carbon footprint that can be tracked to the industry. Additionally, according to a study pursued by Farrant, Olsen, and Wangel (2010), “The reduction of impacts resulting from collecting 100 apparel for reuse range from 14% decrease of global warming for the cotton T-shirt to 45% reduction of human toxicity for the polyester/cotton trousers.” While fast fashion is extremely dangerous to our environment, it is just as dangerous for the people who work in the factories.

Social Equity

Social equity is the human tenant of Elkington’s (1997) triple-bottom-line framework. The rapid growth within the apparel industry has led to a human impact, not only during the Industry Revolution but also during modern times with the advent of fast fashion. As a result, continued low wages and the overall poor and unsafe working conditions has led to concerns (Schoenherr, 2019). Gunnar (2019), points out that the increased use of forced labor is another major consequence of fast fashion, with one specific example being the Triangle Shirtwaist fire of 1911. On March 25, 1911, the Triangle Shirtwaist Company’s factory in New York City

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burned down, killing 145 workers (Triangle, 2020). These unnecessary deaths were the result of neglected safety inspections, crowded and cramped working conditions, and locked doors within the factory.

A century later, working conditions in the apparel industry continued to be of concern. In September of 2012 there were two Pakistani apparel fires, on the same day, resulting in the death of over 300 workers (Hobson, 2013). As a boiler exploded in one factory and ignited all of the chemicals there were very few survivors. While the factory burned, the apparel workers had nowhere to turn, all the factory doors were locked, and the windows were barred shut (Hobson, 2013). Then, on November 24, 2012 in Bangladesh, a fire in the Tazreen Fashions factory ended up killing 112 workers who were also unable to escape for the very same reasons. (University of Sussex, 2017). Lastly, history repeats itself when the Rana Plaza complex in Bangladesh collapsed on April 24, 2013 killing a total of 1,133 people, leaving many injured employees unable to work and provide for their families (Siegle, 2015). The majority of these accidents happen in LMICs as they produce 90% of the world's clothing (Bick, 2018). Typically these countries have loose occupational and safety standards that are not enforced due to the lack of organizational management nor established political infrastructure.

Another relevant issue related to sweatshops is the topic of a living wage. Many individuals employed by the fast fashion industry are unable to provide a living for themselves, despite the long hours worked. Research out of Australia states that a voluntary reporting system has been in place in the United Kingdom since 2017 and “Less than 20 per cent of companies have produced statements that meet the minimum requirements and only a handful are doing anything to stamp out abuse” (Human Rights Law Centre, 2018). Furthermore, according to Australia's Human Rights Law Centre (2018), “A report released by

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Oxfam Australia last year showed that for every piece of clothing sold in Australia, as little as two cents makes it back into the pockets of the workers who made it.” Reporting out of Oxfam, a confederation of 19 independent charitable organization, prove that many large, Australian companies such as surf company, Ripcurl, are outsourcing their workers and failing to ensure that they follow respectable corporate social responsibility that encompasses fair pay and treatment of their employees. Additionally, German brand KIK utilized Ali Enterprises garment factory to manufacture apparel. Consequently, Ali Enterprises is now known for employing between 1200-1500 workers involved in an apparel factory fire. While Ali Enterprises earned between \$10 and \$50 million in capital in a month, its workers only earned between \$52 and \$104/month (Hobson, 2013). Another source posits that the fast fashion industry is a \$2.4 trillion industry which employs every 1 in 6 people globally—except less than 2% of the workers are able to earn a wage in which they could live off of (Robb, 2019). The fast fashion industry is profiting while the workers fight for a living wage.

While the United Nations is actively trying to ensure that fashion companies are providing more visibility into their suppliers, health and safety standards, and worker’s rights, there is a long way to go before the fashion industry will be able to prevent against exploitation. The first example of these actions can be seen with the establishment of the Human Rights Watch in 2016. A coalition comprised of eight international labor rights groups and global unions with the ultimate goal of pledging transparency. This in turn allows larger global companies the opportunity to publish their supplier info and offer disclosure. According to the Humans Rights Watch (2018), 17 leading companies pledged to release *all* of their outsourcing information in the pledge, and an additional 18 companies pledged to provide their suppliers’ names and addresses. While this may not seem like a monumental step, it ensures that there is the ability to

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monitor these suppliers, in case any of their practices are not legal or fair. After the Rana Plaza collapse, there was also an initiative called the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Safety established, to protect the worker's freedom of association and to raise the safety standards in many of these factories (Human Rights Watch, 2018). These strides towards meeting the triple bottom line and ensuring brand corporate responsibility are a great place to start, but ultimately are not removing the health threat that working in these factories and warehouses pose.

While the fast fashion industry is known for its harmful work environment, it also poses a serious threat to the garment workers' health. For one, the research conducted at a Bangladeshi knitwear factory conclusively displayed a long list of health threats that the workers were facing such as dust/smoke inhalation, lack of ventilation, noise, musculoskeletal pain, high levels of stress, exposure to lights, electric wires, and chemical adhesives (European Union News, 2017). The combination of the overabundance of chemicals prominent in these factories, the lack of ventilation/protective equipment available for the workers, and the extremely long hours forced upon the workers encompass the reasons why fast fashion can be so detrimental to human health.

Due to the overabundance of chemicals and toxins that these fast fashion apparel workers are exposed to, they tend to experience many negative health effects. One example of the health impacts that the fast fashion industry has had on their workers would be the constant exposure to pesticides in the cotton farming stage. Many of these pesticides used are lethal, and can end up causing skin diseases, as well as birth defects such as cleft-lip palette. In the documentary, *The True Cost*, one US farmer dies from the after-effects of being exposed to the pesticide every day and one Indian farmer's children are both born with mutations due to the pesticides in their drinking water from agricultural runoff (True Cost, 2015). The prominence of these toxins can be extremely detrimental to these workers' health.

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Another issue that impacts these garment workers' health is the poor ventilation and lack of protective equipment provided by employers. Numerous studies from the *Journal of Occupational Health* observe various small workplaces, employing less than 10 workers, and noted that the sandblasting of jeans for contract to larger companies was correlated to be the cause of silicosis in many of these workers. The five workplaces that were observed all did not provide sufficient ventilation and the workers were not wearing protective equipment while working—of the 11 men working as denim sandblasters (mean age of 32), over one third of the men showed evidence of silicosis in their radiology reports (Hobson, 2013). Further research between 2004 and 2006 indicates that there were 14 more cases of silicosis between men with a mean age of 23 who had been denim sandblasting for a mean duration of 3 years (Hobson, 2013) therefore truly correlating these poor working conditions with such a serious health hazard.

Finally, the long hours that these factory workers endure is another reason employment in fast fashion is a major health hazard. A study conducted in the Delhi capital region reported that approximately 67% of all workers work 10-12 hours per day in an informal sweatshop—of these individuals, 39% suffer from eye strain and the other 41% suffer from exhaustion (European Union News, 2017). More severe complications that are correlated with working these long hours in unfit working conditions in LMICs are “Lung disease and cancer, damage to endocrine function, adverse reproductive and fetal outcomes, accidental injuries, overuse injuries, and death” (Bick, 2018). Through the action of fashion companies and consumers' simply reusing or repurposing clothing, these apparel workers would no longer be exposed to the level of danger associated with the fast fashion manufacturing process. Unfortunately, the majority of fast fashion brands do not repurpose or reuse apparel in order to lessen their impact, which has

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inspired a “revolution” that seeks more transparency and better safety standards within the fashion industry.

Providing a Solution

The Fashion Revolution movement grew out of the desire for change and to make a difference. It was clear that the exploitation of workers had not improved and to ensure these individuals would be protected by their employers, the world’s largest fashion activism movement Fashion Revolution was formed. Annually, the organization promotes the #whomademyclothes campaign in April, which falls on the anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

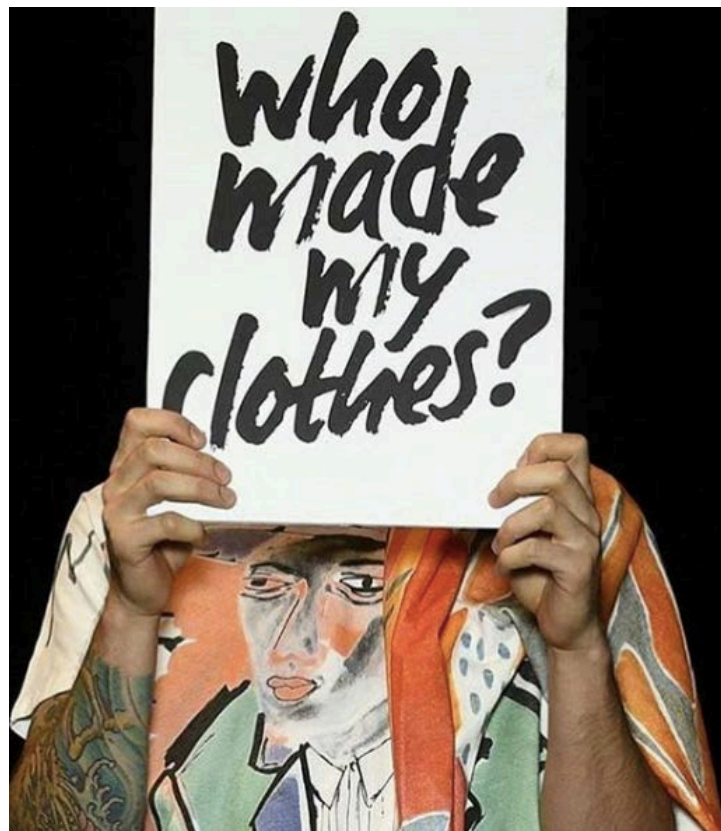


Figure 1. #Whomademyclothes? This image acts as a testament to the apparel workers whose long hours, low pay, and potentially unsafe working conditions resulted in this piece. From Fashion Revolution (@fash_rev), Instagram, Feb. 27, 3030.

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Fashion Revolution Week aims to increase transparency within the fashion industry. Transparency is defined by Fashion Revolution as, “The public disclosure of credible, comprehensive, and comparable data and information about fashion’s supply chains, business practices, and the impacts of these practices on workers, communities, and the environment” (Fashion Revolution, 2020). The most transparent companies of 2020 include H&M, C&A, Adidas/Reebok, Esprit, Marks & Spencer, Patagonia, North Face, Timberland, Vans, Wrangler (VF Corp) Puma, ASOS, and Converse, Jordan, and Nike (Nike Group) (Fashion Revolution, 2020). By making this company information public, it allows consumers to make an educational decision about their consumption, and it gives other less transparent companies an incentive to try and change their corporate social responsibility and meet the triple bottom line.

Fashion Revolution’s (2019) mission states: “We want to unite people and organizations to work together towards radically changing the way our clothes are sourced, produced, and consumed, so that our clothing is made in a safe, clean and fair way.” Fashion Revolution helps to spread awareness of slow fashion and the concepts essential to caring for apparel and extending their life. Slow fashion describes long-lasting, locally manufactured clothing, primarily made from sustainably sourced fair-trade fabrics (Stefko & Steffek, 2018).

Additionally, slow fashion focuses on artisanal craftsmanship and utilizing local resources rather than outsourcing. According to Fashion Revolution (2019), implementing practices derived from slow fashion include those opposing fast fashion: utilizing clothes longer by expanding the product lifespan, lessening clothing consumption, reinventing, recycling, reusing apparel, swapping items with friends, thrifting or secondhand shopping, and purchasing from local craftsmen or environmentally-friendly brands (Stefko & Steffek, 2019). Utilizing various methods of apparel care decreases the need to shop fast fashion and ensures that older apparel is

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in circulation for longer (Fashion Revolution, 2017). One study conducted by Kozar and Connell (2010) “Found that over 50% of college students reported knowledge of socially responsible practices; however, only about 25% reported that they had engaged in SR [socially responsible] apparel purchasing behaviors.” Essentially, half of the college students questioned were aware socially responsible practices, and yet it was only of importance to half of that group to take direct action.

Although these college students do not necessarily feel obliged to shop sustainable brands, many companies are realizing the impact that the fast fashion industry has and are setting sustainable development goals for the future. Marks and Spencer’s sustainable development goal for 2025 encompasses engaging their consumers with sustainable purchasing, ensuring 100% of their factories are on a sustainability ladder, transforming 1,000 communities, and taking a lead on addressing in-work poverty, modern-day slavery, and inclusive society (Burns, 2019). Another sustainable development plan by H&M is referenced as “The Vision”, and aims towards accomplishing three ambitions: (1) 100% leading the change, (2) 100% circular and renewable, and (3) 100% fair and equal (Burns, 2019). Various other companies such as Eileen Fisher, Hanes, PVH, and Candiani have also established sustainable development plans in an attempt to operate according to the triple-bottom-line and ensure that their practice remains transparent.



Figure 2. Is This What It Takes? From “How Cheap Is It, Really? (2017). *Junior Scholastic/Current Events*, 1, 24.” Is this the type of tag that consumers need to see before deciding to act on their knowledge of social responsibility?

Scope and Significance

As discussed above, rejecting fast fashion and substituting slow fashion practices ensures that clothing will remain in circulation longer. Previous studies clearly define fast fashion (Barnes & Greenwood, 2010; Birtwistle & Moore, 2007; Bryun & Sternquist, 2008; Buckley & Clark, 2012; Horton, 2018) and the consumers’ reasoning for purchasing fast fashion over haute couture or designer goods (Horton, 2018; Seigle, 2019). The literature focuses primarily on what the consumer’s current consumption and discarding habits are versus alternate options for discarding clothing (Gunnar, 2019; Horton, 2019; Hyun-Mee Juong, 2014; Schoenherr, 2019;). According to Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010), because of the ease of access to media and magazines displaying current trends, consumers are increasingly interested in fashion and appearance, and therefore desire newness and variety, which leads them to frequent shopping. This frequent exposure to fashion encourages frequent shopping, which can then be combined

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with the fact that fast fashion supports those on “relatively low incomes” (Buckley and Clark, 2012), and it becomes blatantly obvious that these are consumers’ motivating factors when shopping fast fashion. What lacks coverage within the literature is how to encourage individuals to alter their current habits to be more conscious of their consumption and instead move forward in creating their own styles of already available resources. In order to educate individuals on the difference that they can make by reducing their consumption and creating on their own, they need to feel comfortable creating an alternative plan that involves sketching a design, material knowledge, and execution of apparel creation, that way they can continue to channel their style without feeling like they are giving up on their own individuality.

To further build on the existing knowledge related to sustainability and historical fashion perspectives the purpose of this study is to share the process taken by the author to create a repurposed apparel. Thus, the following three research objectives were developed to address the purpose of this study: (1) to explore the creation process utilizing non-conventional materials in a design (2) to provide perspective on the challenges and accomplishments faced whilst constructing, and (3) to physically lay out the impact of consumers switching from fast fashion to personal wardrobe design.

Design Development Process

In order to develop a sustainable design, it is crucial to reference the framework of Elkington’s (1997) triple bottom line, and interpret the concept of sustainability. Reduce, reuse, and recycle were the original thoughts that were contributed to the idea of crafting this design. If one reduces their consumption, they are lessening the interaction that apparel workers have with chemicals, dyes, and toxins and they are not contributing to supporting companies who are underpaying their workers. If one reuses, they are drastically reducing the disposal of apparel and

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therefore helping to curb the pollution caused by the fashion industry. Lastly, if one recycles, they are finding a way to ensure that the cycle of this material continues, and there is no “grave” for the apparel. Promoting a circular economy helps to transition between discarding items or apparel and repurposing them to gain the most benefit (WRAP, 2020). In constructing the Penmen Press Party Dress, there was a desire to change the linear process of the traditional making, using, and disposal to a more circular effect. Instead, utilizing recyclable newspapers allowed the author to create apparel that not only saves the energy and resources necessary to produce other fabric textiles, but ensures that the final product can then be valued and kept for a period of time before being recycled over again.

Inspiration

The inspiration behind the Penmen Press Party Dress is derived from the non-conventional material challenges that can be observed on fashion oriented shows such as *Project Runway*, *Next in Fashion*, or as seen in numerous social media tutorials (see figure 3 below). By incorporating a recyclable material into a dress rather than utilizing new textiles that have to flow through all of the stages of production, Elkington’s (1997) environmental and social aspects of the triple bottom line are met. The inspiration for this dress also comes from the author’s personal experience listening to key note speakers such as Celeste Malvar-Stewart and Kate Fletcher present their work at the 2019 International Textile and Apparel Association Sustainability in Fashion Conference in London. Upon witnessing how these designers have integrated sustainable practices into their own brands, a design perspective for this thesis emerged. This unique design of this dress represents the fun and playfulness of a young woman, but the seriousness of the issue of sustainability at hand. The dress helps to promote the shift of the fashion industry from the latest fast-fashion model to a more traditional slow fashion cycle

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invocating sustainability, with the value of reconstruction, innovation, and proper caretaking of apparel. The forefront of this project is to create a dress that is wearable, while simultaneously avoiding environmental impacts and coinciding with the trends seen in the fast-fashion industry. By constructing a dress made solely of recycled newspapers, the impact of this design will be relatively less destructive than the process of creating one single item in the fast fashion industry.



Figure 3: Nonconventional Material Challenge. This image embodies the spirit of using nonconventional materials such as pillows or toilet paper, and creating something fashion-forward from them. From Pillow Challenge (@pillowchallenge), Instagram, April 12,2020.

Incorporating Historical Context

American history influenced the design and construction of the Penmen Press Party Dress as well. The two most prominent construction techniques within the dress are weaving and fringing. These two elements of construction are also crucial aspects of America's fashion history. While weaving is the basis of all historic garments going back to the Ancient world, fringing is associated with the beginning of the true "American style."

Weaving is the basic process that consists of overlapping or "turning" multiple threads of yarn made of fibers into cloth. This process became mechanized in the early 19th century, when the jacquard loom and the punch card system was invented (Scaturro, 2009). However, there is evidence that proves that weaving dates back to 9,000 years ago in the Middle East, and then began to expand practice into North and South America (Elsasser, 2010). Technological advances to the weaving process has led to losing some of the "craftsmanship" and skill that the process once entailed. However, this is not always the case. Elisha Renne (1995) explains as a custom, the Bunu women of Nigeria still practice a traditional marriage performance that incorporates the blue-black handwoven marriage cloths woven by these women themselves. The pride of the marriage and pride of the resourcefulness of these hand-woven cloths is respected and promoted in this culture, and the cloths handwoven from the older women are then borrowed for use by the new brides—instilling a positive message for their married life ahead. This concept of not only handcrafting a cloth for a wedding, but then supporting the local community by allowing the cloths to be passed down for use is a direct translation of what "slow" fashion is, which is why the Penmen Press Party Dress has a woven newspaper bodice influences by the blue-black colors printed in the Penmen Press.

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The next process, fringing, also exemplifies American Pride. Fringe is essentially a decorative border of loose threads, tassels, or twists that edge a material. In the early 20th century, fringe was used to portray American and Spanish costume, with frontier-influenced fashion as well as North American indigenous dress. For example, the women performing in “Wild West” shows were all filmed wearing fringe as part of their costumes (Wilson, 2010). Annie Oakley was one major star who brought a lot of attention to the frontier-style fringing that would end up blossoming and become even more popular throughout time.

Additionally, when Theodore Roosevelt ran his 1904 presidential campaign, he was photographed wearing a fringe leather shirt and a wide-brimmed Stetson hat, therefore showing that he was affiliated with the West (Wilson, 2010). Many other styles of frontier dress include fringing—from chaps, vests, and shirts to jackets. Fringe was also utilized by North American Native Americans, typically paired with intricate beadwork (Wilson, 2010). Modern designers such as Ralph Lauren, Balmain, Celine, Nina Ricci, and Loewe all incorporate fringing techniques in their designs, as fringe is a tribute to fashion history and compliments designs often on the catwalk. The sense of pride that was associated with fringe when it was such a peculiar fashion design at the time is the reason why it became such a successful American staple. Not only is this frontier-style representative of the new frontier, but it coincides with the purpose of this thesis, which is the search for a new frontier of more sustainable fashion.

Combining Aesthetics for a Modern Woman

The result of the Penmen Press Party Dress design is a collision of historical trends and modern day sustainability esthetics. While realizing that the Penmen Press Party Dress translates in appearance differently than a fringed jacket or hand-woven textile, it still embodies some of the techniques that are the backbone to our fashion industry today. Similar to the emphasis on

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craftsmanship and supporting the community exhibited by the Bunu women of Nigeria, the Penmen Press Party Dress incorporates newspapers taken from campus after use and have been repurposed to promote the rise of slow fashion. The pride that is so apparent in any of the imagery of fringe from the North American Native Americans and people on the frontier is translated through the pride that the creator of the Penmen Press Party Dress has for her school, and for ensuring that available resources are more purposefully utilized. Pride acts as the foundation of caring for a garment, as the effort and time that is put into these handcrafted pieces creates a bond between the garment and the maker. Looking back through history, clothing was always cared for and kept well, because of the sense of pride associated with handcrafting it. When there is an emotional connection or sense of pride attached to a garment, it becomes difficult to dispose of, and therefore has better longevity. While the dress is aesthetically a party dress rather than a more direct representation of either of these techniques, it still encompasses and respects all of the most crucial components that historically are offered by weaving and fringing, while still allowing the dress to appear both modern and fun.

Process

To present the design development process in full, the following section provides a detailed discussion of the design process, beginning with the vision and initial sketch. Next, an overview of the construction of the skirt of the Penmen Press Party Dress is provided, including a discussion on the process of creating the textiles necessary for the design. Finally, a summary of the construction process relative to the bodice is provided, along with commentary on the final pinning stage of design. From there, the results of the construction phase of the Penmen Press Party Dress will be analyzed, and a critique will be offered.

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Vision & Initial Sketch

Prior to sketching or making any decisions on the materials that would be utilized in the design, it was crucial to have an idea of the type of apparel that is to be constructed. The vision involved a large gown, of which was very intricate, structured, and held large floral origami. However, moving forward in trying to find materials that were of excess around campus, it became clear that the materials available on-hand that were both recycled *and* were clean to use did not support the style that the author had been envisioning. Upon testing the drape of the materials that had been collected, it was quickly noted that these newspapers would support a less-structured dress, with more flow to it. From there, the vision was revisited, and the author began to sketch a design seen in figure 4, that they believed would be complimented by the Penmen Press newspapers that had been picked up. Discussed in the next section will be the following step, creating the skirt from these textiles.



Figure 4. The Initial Penmen Press Party Dress Sketch. This sketch was the very first physical interpretation of the Penmen Press Part Dress, initially incorporating a peplum and cape for extra décor.

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Creating the Skirt

The next step in the process was prepping the textiles. To do so, newspapers were cut into numerous rectangular pieces, and then fringe the bottom half of each piece by cutting upward slits from the bottom. To ensure that the fringe would be present in the design and actually drape properly, the newspapers were stacked and then pinned in a waterfall formation, before they were sewn together. Each full row of fringe for the skirt required eight panels of the fringed textile, and there were four panels total needed to complete the skirt. Upon completing the four panels, they were draped on the mannequin and pinned into place to be sewn.



Figure 5. Progression of the Skirt. This image displays the handcrafted, fringed textiles before they were pinned and sewn together to create the skirt. Each layer of fringe was hand-cut and sewn to the next piece of fringe, therefore ensuring there were no gaps in the textile.

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Creating the Bodice

The last step in the design process was the construction of the bodice. Due to the dress already having a beautiful drape from the skirt, the designer/researcher felt that a more timeless dress would have a neckline that balances out the complexity of the bottom of the dress. Therefore, she decided that the bodice would be a dramatic sweetheart, deep V neckline. To create this look, the designer folded the newspaper it into 1.5" x 11" strips, making eight of these strips total. From there, these strips were woven together, pinned, and laid on top of a larger sheet of newspaper. As seen in figure 6, upon weaving the strips together, the designer sewed a pattern into the textile with a zig-zag stitch, ensuring that each piece was sewn to the next until the textile was pliable and sturdy. From there, the excess newspaper on the bottom was trimmed off so that no skin would be peeking through the weave. That panel was then pinned to the front of the bodice, for the look that is completed right now.



Figure 6. A Look into the Creation of the Bodice. This image represents the texture and design behind each piece of the hand-woven bodice. The zig-zag stitch ensured there was not only more flare to the bodice, but an extra sense of durability.

Results

Due to the global pandemic of COVID-19 and other outside circumstances, the dress is not completely finished. However the concept of sustainability and design have shown through my design as a researcher. While this apparel was difficult to bring to fruition, it allowed me a chance to remind others that in projects, the effort that is put in will become the outcome. Ultimately, this dress represents the fact that society's habits can be changed for the better, as long as they want them to and are willing to work towards that change. By avoiding overconsumption and focusing time, energy, and heart on creating rather than shopping fast fashion—we may be able to change the world before it is too late.

A mannequin is shown from the waist up, wearing a dress made of newspaper clippings and colorful paper scraps. The dress has a fitted bodice and a full, tiered skirt. The mannequin is positioned in front of a blue wall. To the right, there is a white shelf with various items, including a wicker basket, a small white vase, and some books. A large wicker basket is on the floor to the left of the mannequin. The floor is covered with a light-colored carpet.

Conclusion

Although the fashion industry has a long way to go before their operations can be defined as sustainable, every bit of progress that we make helps to bring more transparency to the industry. The purpose of this thesis was to provide a first-hand account of apparel design using nonconventional materials as an alternative to shopping fast fashion. Subsequently, there is more craftsmanship, pride, and time involved in creating this apparel, it is not as easily disposable and therefore ensures that the apparel will have more longevity. To conclude, the purpose of this thesis was to build on the existing knowledge related to sustainability and historical fashion and create a repurposed apparel. This exploration was guided by the three objectives developed to address the purpose of this thesis: (1) to explore the creation process utilizing non-conventional materials in a design (2) to provide perspective on the challenges and accomplishments faced whilst constructing, and (3) to physically lay out the impact of consumers switching from fast fashion to personal wardrobe design.

Reflection and Implications

Within this project, there were both accomplishments and challenges that contributed to the creation of the Penmen Press Party Dress. However, the accomplishments allowed myself to stay motivated, and from those implications have stemmed many opportunities to reflect and critique my own process in order to understand the best route for constructing apparel in the future.

Implication

The findings of this study contribute to the literature by providing further insight on the direct connection between the education of slow fashion versus fast fashion, craftsmanship, and the ability to change consumption long-term by promoting creation. Likewise, the study

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examined the way that the author chose to construct apparel utilizing knowledge from not only a sustainability standpoint, but a historical standpoint in combination to create a modern aesthetic. This study will also contribute to the results available for those who may be interested in integrating slow fashion into their lifestyle.

Reflective Critique

Upon constructing the majority of the Penmen Press Party Dress, there were numerous factors that affected the final product and its stage of completion. The first challenge that I faced was the inability to truly focus on the design and construction with the ongoing global pandemic. Since I was adapting to so many lifestyle changes that were all occurring within a very short period of time, my motivation to work on the Penmen Press Party Dress was low, as it was not a top priority. Furthermore, having little to no design experience and completing non-conventional material apparel proved to be extremely difficult, as resources were limited and there was no available opportunity to work hands-on with others.

On the other hand, I experienced many “small wins” throughout this apparel construction. Of these small wins included successful construction of the fringed textiles, beautiful draping ability of the textiles onto the mannequin, learning to properly work the sewing machine that I have owned but rarely used, and seeing my sketch and vision come to life. The confidence I gained from merely watching my own craftsmanship and hard work payoff is a feeling that is rarely replicated.

However, some changes that I would make in the future would be to practice working with patterns and muslin prior to constructing this dress. Familiarity with apparel design would have helped with the construction of the dress, rather than my method of merely placing textiles on a mannequin and draping them. Another change I would make in the future would be to

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choose a non-conventional material that has more drape and is not as fragile and easy to compromise. The last suggestion for any future dress construction would be to ensure that a proper amount of time is being allocated to complete the apparel. My time management was not always consistent, and keeping a strict working schedule would have been beneficial for tracking progress. Additionally, it would assist in meeting deadlines. However, the experience that I gained while constructing the Penmen Press Party Dress has helped me to gain better craftsmanship, and will be extremely beneficial for any future projects further down the line.

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